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ABSTRACT

A critical analysis of reports and empirical literature on the quality of candidates in teacher education programs is presented and the results of a nation-wide survey of basic skills competencies required of such candidates are described. While standardized test scores for education majors have been declining, many states in the survey did not corroborate an attendent decline in basic skills competencies. It was also noted that a growing number of states are requiring prospective teachers to pass a test of basic skills, and at least two states are requiring a similar test for inservice teachers. In response to concerns over eroding standards, representatives of state credentialing agencies have recommended that colleges and universities impose stricter entrance and exit requirements, remedial coursework for students deficient in basic skills, and revocation of program certification of certain teacher training institutions that continue to graduate high numbers of students who fail to meet basic skill criteria. A copy of the survey instrument is appended. A master list of College Reading and Learning Assistance Technical Reports is also provided. (JD)

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Quality Assessments of Prospective Teachers: Surveys of Previous and Present Practices

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College Reading and Learning Assistance
Technical Report 85-11
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A long standing concern in education recently received new focus and new publicity. Currently, the popular press as well as professional educators are raising questions about the quality of students in training to be teachers. Specifically, concern over these students' reading, writing and computuational skills surfaces regularly in weekly news magazines, daily newspapers, professional education journals, government reports as well as in the casual conversations of members of the public.

While the concerns for the state of education appear to be genuine, it is not so clear that the facts bear out this concern. Are the teacher candidates of 1985 less skilled or less able than their cohorts of past decades? What kinds of data are available to clarify such a question? If we are experiencing a quality crisis among teacher candidates along with increasing supply shortages of teachers, what might be be appropriate ways to improve the quality of available candidates? Is the current movement toward pre-entrance and pre-exit assessment the answer? On the other hand, should teacher candidates enroll in coursework which has been modified to teach them both pedagogy and personal competencies with the basic skills?

Unfortunately, the answers to these questions are not readily available; there is scarce comprehensive and reliable data on the reading, writing and computation abilities of this group. While some schools of education may indeed systematically test their undergraduates, it is

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usually at the departments' discretion, and the practice is not required nor are the results reported widely. In instances when data are made available, there appears to be little consistency with respect to design, instrumentation and format of the assessment program. A major concern at this point is to learn what kinds of testing and restrictions are being used by institutions that train teachers. In an attempt to assess current practices in the testing of basic competencies for prospective teachers, a survey of states' testing practices was undertaken. A complete copy of the survey is presented in the Appendix.

A Survey of Basic Skills Requirements for Teachers in Training

A survey instrument was developed to collect information regarding several broad areas of concern in basic skills testing as a requirement in teacher credentialing. These areas were: (1) past, present and projected trends in basic skills competencies among credential candidates, (2) instruments used in assessing basic skills competencies and standards of mastery, and (3) current pass/fail rates on basic skills examinations among credential candidates. The survey was comprised of 15 forced-choice questions with some opportunity for additional written responses. The items included on the final survey were selected form a pool of 20 possible items. These original items were reviewed by a panel of five experts in the fields of General Teacher Education, Reading Education

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and College Developmental Studies, who helped to modify the questionnaire into its present form.

Through the 1984 directory for the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), the researchers obtained the names and addresses of credentialing agencies and officers for each state as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa and Guam. A total of 54 surveys were mailed in the Spring of 1984. One year later, after two follow-up mailings, all but the District of Columbia, Louisianna, Puerto Rico and Guam had responded. To insure the timeliness of the results, it was decided to begin the analysis in spite of the unreturned surveys from the four credentialing agencies.

The responses for the items on the questionaire were coded on Fortran and Data Coding Forms. Frequency counts and other descriptive statistics were generated with the process of computer analysis. The results are presented and discussed as they relate to topics and issues synthesized from an extensive review of the research in the area of basic skill competency testing for prospective teachers.

Reports on the Literacy of Preservice Teachers

Research literature. Some reports of prospective teachers' reading abilities have surfaced sporadically in professional journals. Cline, in 1969, and later Hodges (1982) reported that education students at Colorado State University were, on the average, at the fiftieth percentile

rank on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test (NDRT) for all subtests. Mikulecky and Ribovich (1981) found scores in the sixtieth percentile range for all four measures on the NDRT for students enrolled in reading methods courses at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

Faculty teams at the Pennslyvannia State University have been actively charting undergraduate competence in reading, writing and speaking. Using the fortieth percentile on the NDRT as a criterion level and 90% accuracy on a criterion recall task, Fagan and Dupuis (1983) reported that one fifth to one third of the prospective teachers from Penn State, the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay failed to achieve successfully on at least one of the critierion measures. In addition, several students were evaluated below a holistic criterion for both speaking and writing. In another study with only secondary teachers, Dupuis (1980) found the subjects' mean NDRT to be at the sixtieth percentile. However, Dupuis and Fagan (1982-83) caution that there are only modest correlations (.16 -.36) between the reading, writing and speaking subtests. While these subtests do appear to be related slightly, the question of construct validity is of concern. Hence, Fagan and Dupuis (1983) offer a challenge. They suggest that additional data be collected across universities. Yet, these researchers also warn that this task might be difficult to accomplish because the fear of possible negative results, with concommitant adverse

publicity, might result in negative political ramifications for the institutions participating in such studies.

In another interesting study, Sullivan (1976) tested the functional literacy of prospective teachers. Reasoning that adequat reading ability for job performance would depend on competence with teachers' manuals accompanying basal reading series, Sullivan tested three groups of education students with cloze passages drawn from selected basals. One group of students was enrolled in an introductory reading methods course, while the second and third groups were in their second and third methods courses, respectively. When comparing a NDRT total score for students' reading abilities with a Flesch Reading Ease score for text difficulty, 33 % of the population was deemed functionally illiterate, that is, reading at a level less than the measured grade thirteen level of the teachers' manuals. However, when percent accuracy of cloze performance was used as a criterion measure, the students deemed illiterate ranged to as high as 52 % of the population. What is even more interesting, is that the number of reading courses completed did not affect performance on the cloze test.

In assessing the writing skills of preservice English teachers, Veal and Hume (1981) compared the students' performance on the National Teacher Examination (NTE) "commons" section with their supervising teachers' judgements regarding the students' writing abilities. After

ongoing observation, these supervisors also rated the students' ability to teach high school writing. Assuming the observing teachers' ratings were reliable, Veal and Hume contend that the NTE does not serve as a good predictor of the ability to teach writing. However, the authors also note that while students' writing and their writing subskill knowledge had been adequately assessed, their abilities in teaching writing had not been adequately assessed. In addition, there was no mention of interrater reliabilty.

From the very limited data available on the measured skill levels in the reading, writing and speaking of preservice teachers, there does appear to be cause for concern. On the other hand, there is a critical need to collect consistently and analyze systematically more reliable data.

Survey data. Three questions from the current survey were specifically targeted at the basic competency level of teachers presently in training. Given the current output of publications containing suggestions that basic skills levels of candidates have been declining, the present survey asked credentialing officers to compare the 1984 candidate with candidates from the 1975 cohort. Essentially, question one asked the respondents to rate the competency levels of the education candidates from their respective states in six basic skills areas (reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, and study skills). The data in Table 1 demonstrate that for all categories a clear majority of the respondents (n=45)

were unable to compare the skill levels of the candidates across the years.

The lack of responses appear to be based on a combination of factors, including (1) the lack of cross year data available to the credentialing officer, (2) the relative newness of credentialing officers to their current positions, (3) the unwillingness of the officers to voice subjective responses based on raw data, and (4) changes in the instruments used for basic skill assessments. Those individuals willing to voice an opinion stated that basic skills levels had either improved or held constant over the past ten years. Only a bare minority of respondents felt recent candidates possessed skill levels that were not on a par with earlier cohorts.

A second question that addressed the basic skill level of teacher candidates asked for data on what percentage of education candidates passed any required test of basic skills competency. Only 14 credential officers of the 22 respondents reporting current criteria listed the approxiamate percentage of prospective teachers pass their states' basic skills assessments. When the responses are viewed along the regional groupings of the International Reading Association (IRA), the percentage of candidates passing the tests varied considerably from region to region. Data was most readily available from the Southeastern and Southwestern Regions. The reported order of passing rates by states is presented in descending order: (1) North

Carolina, South Carolina (91-100%); (2) Kentucky, New Mexico, Oklahoma (81-90%); (3) Alabama, Delaware Florida, Mississippi, and Oregon (71-80%); California, Colorado-English, spelling (61-70%); (5) Texas (51-60%); and (6) Colorado-math, Arizona (41-50%).

Caution must be used in interpreting this information. In fact, the data should not be judged on a state-by-state basis because of variation in assessment devices and criterion levels required for passage. In addition, figures represent only the most recent assessment up until the date of the survey. Nevertheless, it is apparent that differences exist across the country.

It is also interesting to note changes in passing rates that have occurred in certain states. Rather than comparing states to one another, the observable trends in passing rates within each state may offer a more accurate picture of basic skills levels of prospective teachers. Only ten respondents reported this type of data. Four states reported that the passing rate had increased moderately, while five other stated that the results have remained constant. Arizona was the only state to report a major decrease in passing rates. Yet, this drop appears to the result of a change in instrumentation, a factor frequently overlooked in the popular press.

Performance Measures for Prospective Teachers

Research literature. As a direct result of the recent public scrutiny and threats of scrutiny, several states have

now initiated programs that will assess the basic literacy and computational skills of prospective teacher education majors (Dearman & Plisko, 1980). Arkansas, Delaware, New Mexico, New York and Texas require or will soon require passage of an admissions test of basic skills prior to enrolling in professional education courses. Texas and other states will use the Pre Professional Skills Test (PPST) published by Educational Testing Service.

As an alternative measure of quality control, some schools of education have already raised the grade point averages (GPA) required for admittance to teacher education programs. Clearly, the intent in raising entrance level GPAs is to improve the pool of the entering students and thereby train and graduate more literate teachers. According to Villeme and Hall (1980), however, preservice GPA does not predict eventual success in teaching. With a sample of 458 education students, stratified by both major and quartiles of graduation rank, the investigators found no significant differences between the groups' eventual employment (1) as teachers, (2) as substitute teachers, (3) as members of the general workforce, or (4) as unemployed. The significant variables in predicting employment status were the students' persistence in job searching and their willingness in relocating if a job was available in another locale. Furthermore, there were no significant GPA differences between teachers who were either satisfied or unsatisfied with their selected positions. Apparently,

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then, a GPA restriction may improve the appearance of quality in terms of reports and records, but there is little data supporting its use as a predictor of success in finding a position or in being satisfied in that position.

There may be difficulties in using correlative, test-derived data to restrict enrollment and hence improve the quality of teacher candidates. If entrance to teacher education programs is denied based on test data, the institutions doing so must be able to demonstrate that the test is a representative sampling of job related skills and/or field based knowledge insuring adequate levels of construct validity. Such a mandate would be derived from the United States Supreme Court's holding in Griggs vs. Duke Power, where the court held in favor of the plaintiff. Furthermore, the decision rendered in Griggs vs. Duke Power has been upheld in litigation concerning teacher selection (Baker vs. Columbus Municipal Sep. Sch. Dist.) and for teacher retention (Armstead vs. Starkville Sep. Sch. Dist.). It is clear, from at least a judicial standpoint, that the criteria used in entrance and exit tests must be related to potential or actual job performance.

The issue of job relatedness of exit level tests for reading certification has been discussed by Flippo, Hayes and Aaron (1983). These researchers compared the content of a state required reading specialists' liscensing exam, with the instructional emphases of graduate-level methods courses in reading for specialists offerred by colleges and

universities in Georgia. Overall, the researchers reported a satisfactory correlation, but they expressed concern over the professors' lack of focus on the students' personal reading skills.

Another, less standardized approach for screening teacher education applicants seems to hold promise. In a study similar to that of Sullivan (1976), Draba, McCarthy and Steinkellner (1981) recommend cloze testing on passages specific to pedagogy content. They determined that students' performance on the secondary-level passages correlated with students SAT scores, rankings of candidates' teaching ability from supervisors, and grades in student teaching. The major benefit of the cloze measure, according to the authors, is its job-relatedness. While passages derived from course texts appear to be in the spirit of Griggs vs Duke Power, the major factor favoring a cloze procedure is its possible correlation with the rankings of a supervising teacher.

Survey data. Several questions from the current survey addressed the issue of criteria used in evaluating prospective teachers' competencies. A general question asked certification officers about their awareness of criterion levels for basic skill competencies of education majors.

In an era when the general public and the educational community alike are alarmed over the perceived decline in the basic skills of credential candidates, one might expect

credentialing authorities to have established criteria on this controversial area. Yet, according to the responses received from 47 officers, a majority of the represented states (56%) do not have a set of criteria in place. The trend, however, is not consistent across all regions of the country. The credential officers in the Southeast Region (IRA) were more apt to report the use of a set of criteria. In fact. this was the case in eight of ten states in that region. In the Southwest Region, as well, a majority of the states (80%) have current criteria for basic skills mastery. On the other hand, a majority of the respondents from the Plains Region, the Greats Lakes Region, and the Western Region noted that such criteria were not specified at the time of the survey. Of interest here is the fact that regions which evidence higher scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test and other such measures are less likely to have developed basic skills criteria for teachers.

In responding to the general question of criteria awareness, a total of 44% of the state certification officers indicated that their respective states (n=22 states or territories) employed criteria denoting basic skills competencies for candidates. The next question asked the credentialing officers to specify the agency, executive board, or legislative body which had established the basic skills criteria in their respective locales. Slightly less than 60% of these respondents noted that a single state body set the standards. In the remaining 40% of the states with

tne criteria in place, a combination of groups set the standards. Hence, of interest was which agencies operate alone or in combination with other state offices to draft basic skills requirements. The survey data showed that in 68% of the states wtih criteria,, the state school board played a major role in establishing the standards. Other agencies involved in the development of the basic skills criteria were (in descending order of citation): (1) the state legislature (32%), (2) the state office of education (23%), (3) the state credentialing agency (09%), (4) an accrediting agency (09%), and (5) the local school boards (05%).

The assessment of the basic skills levels of prospective teachers is nearly as controversial a topic as is the candidates' actual literacy. The next survey question specifically asked whether candidates were required to pass a basic skills test. The data in Table 2 shows that as of the summer of 1985, in 42% of the states, each individual was required to pass a test assessing basic skills before a teaching credential was issued. Once again, it was observed that the states in the IRA Southwestern and Southeastern Regions tended to emphasize basic skills assessment, while a minority of states in other regions required their candidates to perform satisfactorily on a basic skills battery.

The investigators did not attempt initially to determine at what level of academic standing assessment was

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undertaken. The survey data demonstrate that assessment programs require prospective teachers to pass a basic skills test at one of three points in their training: (1) at admission to a teacher training program, (2) at admission to student teaching, or (3) at the point of application for a teaching certificate.

Certification officers were subsequently asked which test was used in assessment. The instruments used to assess the basic skills of credential candidates varied across the nation, although the National Teacher Examination was reported as the most widely used screening instrument. While only 14% of the total number of respondents used the NTE in this manner, 33% of this total required assessment prior to the issuence of certificates. The remainder of the states with such policies employ various tests developed under the auspices of, or approved by, respective state credentialing boards. A sampling of instruments currently used or to be employed in the near future includes the California Achievement Test (Colorado), the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (Kentucky), the California Basic Educational Skills Tests (Oregon), Degrees of Reading Power Test (Connecticut), the PreProfessional Skills Test (Delaware, Texas), and the ACT or SAT (Missouri). As previously stated, it appears that an undetermined number of states now require students to achieve at a predesignated level before admission to a program of teacher education. The use of standardized instruments, such as the CTBS in

Kentucky, the CAT in Colorado, or the state developed tests for college entry in Washington are examples of instruments used for screening purposes in admission to the training programs or into student teaching.

Predictive Measures for Prospective Teachers

Research literature. In the absence of performance data assessing basic skills, studies of teacher education majors have largely relied on standardized test scores, such as those from the ACT and SAT. For the most part, large scale survey studies have used extant, standardized test data.

However, even readily available test scores such as the SAT are not always used effectively with education candidates. Ivie (1981) reports an overall consistent relationship between SAT and NTE scores for Georgia education students. However, he points out that Black teacher candidates have scored significantly lower on the NTE than would have been anticipated from corresponding SAT scores. Ivie suggests that since the NTE is a rapid comprehension test, Black undergraduates' average reading lags of two to three years, inherently affected performance on the measure. He also notes the interplay of possible dialect interference on the grammar and usage subtests. To overcome this problem, Ivie recommends early enrollment in academic courses from the professional sequence during sophomore and even freshman years.

This final suggestion of early introduction of

educational methods courses instead of the usual liberal arts coursework is a common approach in dealing with students' differing backgrounds. These attempts to compensate for different background by early introduction of education courses may be producing the opposite affect. In substituting professional education coursework for general studies, math, science history and/or literature coursework, these schools of education may have placed their students in an even more disadvantaged posture for the NTE or other graduate level examinations used for admission screening. Furthermore, emphasis on education coursework at the expense of liberal arts and general education coursework was a major criticism of the Report on Excellence in Education (1983) along with several other recent reports. The major concern in Ivie's and others' recommendations is that a disproportionate number of minority candidates will be rejected if standardized tests of basic competencies are used as a preadmintance screening device. And similarly so for exit testing.

Recently, Feistritzer (1984) surveyed colleges and universities that, according to the 1984 Market Data Retrieval Directory, train teachers. Of the 1,287 school so identified, 803 or 62 % responded to the survey. The survey data revealed only 25 % of the responding institutions (N=200) even kept SAT or ACT scores for teacher education students. Eighty-two percent of those who kept the scores used information from neither instrument when granting

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admission to professional education programs. In fact, only 37 of the responding 803 institutions used ACT or SAT scores in the admission process (see note 1).

A majority of the respondents in the Feistritzer survey reported that they did not keep any information on academic performance while in high school. Perhaps the rationale for excluding high school data is that professional education programs typically begin in the junior year of college, and high school information may be viewed as having lost its relevancy for denoting junior year skills mastery. Yet, based on Ivie's (1981) report of the relationship between SAT and NTE scores, it is difficult to understand this omission. If there is a predictive relationship between these scores, perhaps additional comparisons will explicate it. By way of caution, however, respondents in the Feistritzer study who addressed the use of SAT data were only about 15 % of the total population.

Feistritzer also reported a figure of 60 % for institutions that require some form of pretesting for admission to teacher education, with 27 % requiring a basic skills test. Acceptance rates to programs ran between 75 % and 100 %. Also evident was students' shifts from larger, more restrictive institutions with higher admission standards to smaller, less restrictive schools. From a qualitative standpoint, this demographic information indicates that our less able population is entering institutions with less stringent admission and exit

requirements. Hence, for any tenacious individual there is a seat in a teacher education program.

Socio-Demographics and Teacher Education

Research literature. Feistritzers' recommendations such as "If teaching is to become a profession, it needs to act like one" (p.52) are not only lacking in substance, but reflect serious flaws in interpretation regarding demographic, sociological and economic factors associated with supply and demand impacting on the quality of the potential educators. Yet, she is not alone. Former Education Secretary Bell (1984) was quoted as saying that during the recent past we have focused on new priorities and, as a result, our standards of excellence have slipped. But when pressed, he also commented that he had no substantive data to support such a contention. Educators must acknowledge the possibility that our students may not be as able as they may once have been. However, we should not abandon the values and humanistic teachings negatively alluded to by Secretary Bell. Clearly, no empirical relationship has been demonstrated between the curriculum of methods courses and students' current abilities. And there exist more plausable explanations for our current state of affairs.

According to Sykes (1983), there has indeed been a quality loss in our new teacher education students. He sites SAT declines that are in excess of the general national decline, Graduate Records Examination (GRE) scores

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that are lower than eight other professional fields, and GPA's for education majors that were 12th out of 16 reviewed fields. Sykes also suggests that the influence of the women's movement created newer, more prestigious, career opportunities for talented women, and, hence, shifted the traditional pool of candidates for education degrees. When coupled with adverse conditions of low entry level salary, low social esteem, few positions of prestige and, at times, dangerous working conditions, it is little wonder that other careers seem more attractive to more talented college students of the 1980's.

Research by Pavalko (1970) concurs with Sykes that we are experiencing a quality decline in teachers. However, Pavalko cautions that decline is not entirely attributable to recent opportunities for women. He suggests that education may not have had exclusive rights to talented females. According to his data, the least intelligent and least capable teachers, as measured by standardized intelligence tests, are the most likely to remain in teaching. This finding clearly points to a drain on the most capable individuals in the field. Similar findings were obtained by Schlechty and Vance (1981) when subjects were stratified by performance on the NTE. Teacher attrition will continue to be a force in an intricate mix of social and economic factors associated with who enters, who doesn't enter and who can't enter the profession.

Survey data. In light of the observed attrition and

the associated quality deficits, it is interesting to observe the credentialing officers' responses to questions seeking their recommendations for students who have failed a required test of basic skills. Slightly more than half of the respondents (54%) answering this item recommended that instutions develop stricter academic standards (e.g., GPA, coursework) for admission to the teacher education program. A lesser number of respondents (23%) recommended that programs develop stricter academic standards for the successful completion of coursework leading to a teaching certificate.

Responses addressing the purpose and timing of assessment activities closely relate to the responses dealing with academic standards. As noted previously in this paper, a number of states require that college students successfully pass a basic skills battery before admission to or during enrollment in a credentialing program. For instance, legislation in California requires that a test be taken for diagnostic purposes prior to admission to a teacher preparation program. At the point of testing, however, the actions taken with students who fail the test or parts of the test are left to the discretion of the teacher education program at the home instutitions.

The question of what to do with failing students is not limited to California nor to states with preadmission assessment designs. Of interest, therefore, are the responses from individuals recommending remedial coursework.

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Several respondents (n=6) suggested that students with skill deficiencies should be required to enroll in remedial coursework before admission to a credential program. Others (n=2) recommended that such a course should be completed before the student is permitted to exit from the actual credentialing program. Finally, another group of respondents (n=4) suggested that teacher preparation programs with large numbers of graduates failing the chosen test should implement a specialized basic skills course for all prospective teachers.

All 13 of the resondents replied with multiple suggestions. It is therefore apparent that they feel no one alternative will solve the problem. Rather, credentialing officers appear to favor a combination of programs which would incorporate stricter standards during the completion of education methods requirements and effective remedial training in developmental courses that focus on basic competencies.

The worth of various remedial programs is likely to gain in value if more state education agencies respond to teacher preparation programs with basic skills deficits in a manner similar to the offices in Tennessee and Florida. Although their definitions, their criteria for mastery, and their method of measurement of basic skills differ, both states' responses to programs that graduate sizable percentages of pupils failing the respective tests is strikingly similar. State approval of the program can be

revoked if it does not rectify the problem. Accountability is thus placed squarely on the teacher preparation program itself.

The trend toward requiring prospective teachers to successfully pass a test of basic skills seems to be a phenomenon that has not yet reached its peak. In fact, 26% of the respondents stated that their respective states (n=13) were planning to introduce such testing programs soon. An additional 10% of the resopndents (n=5) noted that basic skills assessments are under discussion, either by legislative bodies or by state education agencies. Only 11 of the 50 respondents (22%) replied that assessment programs were neither in existence at this time, under consideration currently, nor planned for the future.

Sociodemographic Factors

Research literature. According to government report by Silverman (1980), demand for teachers is projected to increase by the late 80's based on increased public school enrollment. This increase in enrollment will likely be accompanied by a significant decrease in the supply of qualified teachers. There simply will not be enough credentialed teachers to meet the demand. This projected trend has caused many schools of education to cross fingers, shut their eyes tightly and, as in the 1950's, wait for the flood of applicants. Research by Crane (1982), however, suggests that any new demand may be very specific, selective and possess characteristics strongly related to the specific

communities hiring teachers. By using multiple regression, contingency tables and cluster analysis, Crane found that the districts with a more wealthy, highly educated and professionally oriented population (and tax base) may be seeking elementary and secondary teachers in cultural enrichment areas such as art, music and foreign language. Small rural districts with less wealth, lower levels of education, and larger percentages of federal funds may seek vocational education teachers. Larger, urban districts with high incidence of non-English speakers will require basic reading and writing specialists as well as bilingual and secondary remedial teachers. Crane observed little sociodemographic association with general elementary or secondary core areas such as social studies and English, though the need for general elementary teachers is projected to increase. Even with the possibity of a methodological tautology in Crane's research, that is, definitions structured to elicit desired responses, it still brings to focus the issue of a selective need for new teachers. When combined with Silverman's projections for shortages, it refocusses the question of teacher quality as one of supply and demand.

Weaver (1984) aptly addresses the supply and demand issue in teacher education. He states that the quality of people recruited to teaching since 1970 has been well below the typical high school senior or college student in academic performance. Further, he suggests that there is an

historical trend in the "ebb and flow" of education candidates. For instance, during the depression and then immediately following the Second World War, there were limited economic opportunities for college graduates, and teaching was an appealing profession. As a result, unusually bright men prepared to teach during the early years of the depression. In the years after the Second World War, average to bright men once again entered the profession. In the late fifties and sixties, women from the the brightest levels were attracted to teaching. Yet, in all three cases, the brightest soon left the classroom in an exodus Weaver labels "talent following opportunity".

Summary

In this paper, a critical analysis of reports and empirical literature on the quality of candidates in teacher education programs was presented and the results of a nation-wide survey of basic skills competencies required of such candidates was described. Our intent was to test the validity of the seemingly ubiquitous notions regarding the declining qualifications of preservice teachers, as well as to determine what, if anything, is and should be done about it.

While standardized test scores for those students who have chosen education have been declining, many states in the current national survey did not corroborate an attendent decline in basic skills competencies, either from current observations or from longitudinal data, when it was

available. It was also noted that a growing number of states are requiring prospecive teachers to pass a test of basic skills and at least two states are requiring a similar test of basic skills for inservice teachers currently teaching. So we may expect that this increased testing and documentation may lead to more viable comparisons of students in the future. What is yet to be determined, however, is whether these measures of literacy and numeracy can adequately reflect the abilities of the students (and teachers) taking the tests, and whether such tests possess adequate perdictive validity to be useful. In essence, it is not clear what kinds of information will be forthcoming, but this much cannot be argued, there will be a great deal of it.

In response to concerns over eroding standards, representatives of state credentialing agencies have recommended that colleges and universities impose stricter entrance and exit requirements, remedial coursework for students deficient in basic skills, and revocation of program certification of certain teacher training institutions programs that continue to graduate high numbers of students who fail to meet basic skill criteria. While the effectiveness of these measures is not necessarily borne out in a review of the available literature, the practice of stricter standards and additional testing is one that appears to be increasing.

The lack of data-driven evidence to support claims and

counter-claims concerning the abilities of prospective teachers was an alarming discovery for these researchers. While empirical findings are sporadic and piecemeal, innuendo and suppositions abound. There is a critical need for more systematic investigations that might determine the extent to which there is a quality gap among teachers in training. Ideally, these investigations would employ consistent instrumentation and designs that would allow for cross-state and cross-regional comparisons.

Finally, it is argued that when the law of supply and demand is applied to teacher education, it may cut to core of the reasons for possible declines in quality among preservice teachers. Clearly, proposals designed to improve the quality of teachers must be sensitive to these sociodemographic pressures.

The literacy and numeracy levels of prospective teachers remain unclear. Whether or not the measures used in assessing teacher competencies actually do so is also an issue not yet resolved. It may be that standardized measures of literacy do not adequately capture the abilities of students taking these tests. Further, there is doubt that performance on tests such as the ACT and SAT has predictive validity for future teaching success and satisfaction. And finally, we are beginning to at least understand and hopefully respond to the societal demands that cause teacher shortages and surpluses.

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The Basic Skills of Candidates for Teaching Credentials:

A Survey of Current Requirements

In recent years, reports have been surfacing which suggest that some teachers may be entering the work force with deficits in reading, writing, or other basic skills.

The purpose of this survey is to obtain information about the basic skills competencies of candidates seeking a teacher's credential in your state. The information requested can only be supplied by someone like yourself, an officer of a state credentialing agency. Would you please take a few moments out of your busy schedule and complete this brief, easy to answer questionnaire. Your timely response to this questionnaire will be deeply appreciated.

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1. Does the average credential candidate of 1984 have the same competencies with basic skills as did his or her predecessor of 1975? Please place a check in the appropriate box for each skill area listed at the left.

General Skills Area	Higher than the skills level of their predecessors	About the same skills level as their predecessors	Lower than the skills level of their predecessors	Unable to judge skills level
Reading				
Writing				
Spelling				
Speech				
Arithmetic				
Study Skills				
Overall Skills Level				

2. Does the teacher credentialing agency in your state have a standard set of criteria that specify the basic skills competencies (levels) which prospective teachers must possess?

_____Yes _____No

If yes, please go to the next question. (If the criteria or guidelines are in printed form, please attach a copy to your completed survey form.)
If no, please skip to question 4.

3. What agency, executive board, or legislative body established the basic skills criteria? Please check the appropriate options.

_____state legislature

_____state office of education

_____state credentialing agency

_____state school board

_____other (please explain) _____

_____intermediate unit or county school boards

_____local school boards

_____accrediting agency

_____

4. Before a teaching credential is issued by your agency to a prospective teacher, must the individual pass a test designed to assess mastery of the basic skills? Please check the appropriate response.

_____Yes _____No

If your answer is Yes, please continue with the next question.
If your answer is No, please skip to question 12.

5. What instrument is used to assess the basic skills levels of credential candidates? Please check the appropriate responses.

_____the National Teacher Examination

_____the Graduate Record Examination

_____an instrument developed and administered under the auspices of the state credentialing board

_____an instrument developed under the auspices of and administered by an immediate educational agency and approved by the state credentialing board

_____an instrument developed under the auspices of and administered by a local educational agency and approved by the state credentialing board.

_____other _____

6. In what year were credential candidates first required to pass a basic skills examination in order to receive a general teaching credential? _____

7. As of the last test administration from which data is available, what percentage of the credential candidates passed the basic skills test? Please check the appropriate response.

_____Ø -1Ø% _____11-2Ø% _____21-3Ø% _____31-4Ø% _____41-5Ø%

_____51-6Ø% _____61-7Ø% _____71-8Ø% _____81-9Ø% _____91-1ØØ%

Other _____

_____

8. Over the years since the basic skills examination has been required of credential candidates, what are the observable trends in the passage rate? Please check the appropriate response.

_____The passage rate has increased dramatically.

_____The passage rate has increased moderately.

_____The passage rate has remained constant.

_____The passage rate has decreased moderately.

_____The passage rate has decreased dramatically.

9. If your office has issued a descriptive report that details the results of a recent test administration or series of administrations, we would appreciate your attaching a copy to your completed survey form.

Comment: _____

1Ø. Are the credential candidates' pass/fail rates on the basic skills monitored in such a manner that your office is able to provide teacher education programs with an evaluation of their graduates' performance?

_____Yes _____No

Comment: _____

11. What general recommendations are made to teacher education institutions which graduate a large number of students failing the test? Check all that apply and/or provide your input.

_____ Develop stricter academic standards (G.P.A, coursework, etc.) for admission to the teacher education program.

_____ Develop stricter academic standards (G.P.A, coursework, etc.) for successful completion of the credential program.

_____ Develop and administer a basic skills competency measure which must be passed for successful completion of the credential program.

_____ Implement a specialized basic skills course for all prospective credential candidates.

_____ Require students with skills deficits to enroll in remedial coursework before admission to a credential program.

_____ Require students with skills deficits to enroll in remedial coursework before completion of a credential program.

_____ Other _____

_____

_____

Comment: _____

_____

_____

_____

If you answered questions 5-11, please skip to question 13.

12. Does your state plan to implement an assessment program to measure the basic skills competencies of prospective teachers?

_____ Yes _____ No

If the answer is Yes, please continue with the next question.
If the answer is No, skip to question 14.

13. What skills are assessed or will be assessed on your basic skills test for prospective teachers? Please place a check in the appropriate box for each skills area listed at the left.

Skills Area	Assessed by current instrument	To be assessed by future instrument	Not assessed at this time
Reading			
comprehension			
vocabulary			
word recognition			
study skills			
Language Arts			
spelling			
grammar and usage			
penmanship			
punctuation			
speech			
writing			
Arithmetic			
Other			

14. Does your agency currently assess the basic skills competencies of inservice teachers?

_____Yes _____No

15. Does any other agency, either at the state or local level, assess the basic skills competencies of inservice teachers?

_____Yes _____No

If yes, please note the current procedures. _____

_____

_____

Please provide your name and address if you would like a summary of the survey.

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Return this questionnaire and any attached information to:

Norman A. Stahl
Division of Developmental Studies
Georgia State University
Box 872, University Plaza
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3083

Thank you very much.

Master List
College Reading and Learning Assistance Technical Reports
Georgia State University

Technical Report No.	
84-01	Brozo, W. G., Schmelzer, R. V., & Spires, N. A. A Study of Test-Wiseness Clues in College/University Teacher-Made Tests with Implications for Academic Assistance Centers. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 240-928)
84-02	Stahl, N. A., Brozo, W. G., & Henk, W. A. Evaluative Criteria for College Reading-Study Research. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 240-933)
84-03	Schmelzer, R. V., Brozo, W. G., & Stahl, N. A. Using a Learning Model to Integrate Study Skills into a Peer-Tutoring Program. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 256-244)
84-04	Brozo, W. G., & Stahl, N. A. Focusing on Standards: A Checklist for Rating Competencies of College Reading Specialists. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 248-762)
84-05	Stahl, N. A., Brozo, W. G., & Gordon, B. The Professional Preparation of College Reading and Study Skills Specialists. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 248-761)
84-06	Stahl, N. A., & Brozo, W. G. Vocabulary Instruction in Georgia's Postsecondary Reading Programs. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 248-759)
84-07	King, J. R., Stahl, N. A., & Brozo, W. G. Integrating Study Skills and Orientation Courses. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 248-760)
84-08	Brozo, W. G., & Schmelzer, R. V. Faculty Perceptions of Student Behaviors: A Comparison of Two Universities. (Not submitted to ERIC--to appear in an upcoming edition of the Journal of College Student Personnel)

84-09 Henk, W. A., Stahl, N. A., & King, J. R. The Readability of State Drivers' Manual. (Not submitted to ERIC--please refer to Transportation Quarterly, 38(4), 507-520.

84-10 Stahl, N. A., Henk, W. A., & King, J. R. Are Drivers' Manuals Right for Reluctant Readers? (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 245-208)

85-01 Stahl, N. A., Hynd, C. R., & Henk, W. A. Avenues for Chronicling and Researching the History of College Reading and Study Skills Instruction. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 256-245)

85-02 Smith, B. D., & Elifson, J. M. Do Pictures Make a Difference in College Textbooks? (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 256-246)

85-03 Brozo, W. G., Stahl, N. A., & Gordon, B. Training Effects of Summarizing, Item Writing, and Knowledge of Sources on Reading Test Performance. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 256-247)

85-04 Brozo, W. G. Teaching Students to Recognize and Manipulate Structures of Cohesion. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 256-248)

85-05 Henk, W. A., & Stahl, N. A. A Meta-Analysis of the Effect of Notetaking on Learning from Lecture. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 258-533)

85-06 King, J. R. & Stahl, N.A. Training and Evaluating Notetaking. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Pending)

85-07 Chase, N. D. Reader Response Techniques for Teaching Secondary and Post-Secondary Reading. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Pending)

85-08 Hynd, C. R. & Alvermann, D. E. The Role of Refutation Text in Overcoming Difficulty with Science Concepts. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Pending)

85-09 Best, P. A. & Brozo, W. G. Current Research on Studying: A Qualitative Analysis. (ERIC Document Service No. Pending)

85-10 Stahl, N. A., Henk, W. A., Brozo, W. G., & Sickele, M. Developing Independent Learners: Strategies and Tactics for Mastery of Text (ERIC Document Service No. Pending)